

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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SUBJ: KOREAN MEDIA REACTION TO STORIES OF U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL

REF: SEOUL 382 140905Z JAN 77

SUMMARY: PRESS IN KOREA HAS CONTINUED ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST
SUGGESTIONS OF POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES IN KOREA.
END SUMMARY.

1. DENOTING DEEP AND CONTINUING ROK WORRY, KOREAN PRESS HAS
CARRIED CONTINUING SERIES OF STORIES ON "THE WITHDRAWAL OF
U.S. FORCES FROM KOREA" SINCE BEGINNING OF JANUARY.
PRESS PREOCCUPATION WITH ISSUE IS FAR FROM HYSTERICAL BUT HAS
RESULTED IN SOME DISTORTION AND MISUNDERSTANDING. PRESS GAVE
MAJOR SPACE, FOR EXAMPLE, TO FACT PRESIDENT FORD'S BUDGET
FOR FY-78 CONTAINED NO PROVISION FOR CUTTING TROOPS.
ACCORDING TO EHWA PROFESSOR YI YONG-HO, EDITORS FAILED TO
UNDERSTAND PROBABLE IRRELEVANCE OF THIS FACT.

2. JANUARY 18 CHOSON ILBO ARTICLE SIGNED BY YI TO-HYONG,
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ASSISTANT FOREIGN NEWS EDITOR, POINTS OUT THAT CHOSON
ILBO HAS RUN 17 ARTICLES ON THESE TOPICS FROM JANUARY 5-10,
POINT OF ARTICLE IS THAT BECAUSE OF EXPENSE OF SUPPORTING
U.S. FORCES IN ROK \$1.2 BILLION IN FY 1978), U.S., A
GREAT MILITARY POWER "IS APPARENTLY INCLINED TO IMPOSE A
'SECURITY SHARING' SYSTEM" ON JAPAN AND ROK. JAPAN, AN
ECONOMIC POWER, "IS APPARENTLY TRYING TO GET ROK TO SPEND

MORE FOR ITS (JAPAN'S) DEFENSE, WHICH HAS BEEN FREE SO FAR."

3. OTHER EDITORIALS TAKE LESS BITTER LINE, BUT PLAY UP IMPORTANCE OF U.S. FORCES IN KOREA NOT ONLY TO ROK, BUT FOR SECURITY OF NORTHEAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC AREA, AND EVEN ENTIRE WORLD. SEOUL SINMUN EDITORIAL JANUARY 11 SAYS, "WE CANNOT AFFORD THE SLIGHTEST MISTAKE IN THE MATTER IN THE PERFORMANCE OF U.S. DIPLOMACY." SEOUL KYONGJY SINMUN JANUARY 8 NOTED JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA'S INTENTION TO VISIT U.S. AND ASK CARTER TO "HANDLE THE MATTER CAREFULLY." THIS APAPER, COUNSELLING CAUTION, ("AT THE PRESENT TIME, NO RASH DECISION SHOULD BE MADE; THE OUTCOME WOULD BE 'IRREVOCABLE'"), CALLED FOR NEW ADMINISTRATION TO COMPLETE FORCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND "SECURE A FOOLPROOF SECURITY ARRANGEMENT FOR THE KOREAN PENINSULA BEFORE GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL."

4. ANOTHER SPATE OF EDITORIALS JANUARY 18 ALSO GENERALLY ATTACKED CARTER'S PLANS FOR WITHDRAWAL. GOVERNMENT SEOUL SINMUN SAID "U.S. FORCES IN KOREA DO NOT INJURE U.S. DIPLOMACY.... TO INSIST ON PULLOUT IS UNWISE." CHUNGANG ILBO STATED "CARTER CAMP SEEMINGLY TRYING TO COMBINE ROKG SELF-DEFENSE PLAN AND GOJ CONTRIBUTION TO DEFEND KOREA, IN ADDITION TO U.S. NAVAL AND AIR COVER,... BUT GOJ CONTRIBUTION NOT YET FIRM." SINA ILBO NOTED ASSESSMENT OF JAPANESE SELF-DEFENSE AGENCY THAT U.S. HAS "LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT KOREA SITUATION," AND URGED USG CONDUCT PRIOR CONSULTATIONS WITH ROKG AND JAPAN, SAYING "DECISION OF ANY STRONG NATION ON KOREA WHICH EXCLUDES KOREA IS AGAINST CONFIDENTIAL

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MORALITY STRESSED BY CARTER."

5. OUR REVIEW INDICATES OVERALL TONE TAKEN BY NEWSPAPERS IS PRETTY REASONABLE, ALTHOUGH IT SHOWS REAL OPPOSITION AND CONCERN ABOUT SUGGESTIONS OF TROOP WITHDRAWALS NOW. ROKG IS ENCOURAGING THIS. A REPORTER FOR CHOSON ILBO TOLD EMBOFF THAT SPOKESMAN FOR MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION ON JANUARY 19 RE-EMPHASIZED THAT NEWSPAPERS, IN THEIR ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS, SHOULD STRONG STRESS REASONS FOR RETENTION OF US TROOPS IN KOREA. AT SAME TIME HIGH LEVEL SOURCE HAS ALSO INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT ROKG IS CONCERNED THAT PRESS MAY BE MAKING TOO BIG AN ISSUE OF TROOP REDUCTIONS. SNEIDER

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